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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BRUSSELS 001248

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IAEA, NPT, BE  
SUBJECT: BELGIAN VIEWS AND DECISION-MAKING ON  
NONPROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

REF: A. STATE 83600  
    1B. STATE 6970  
    1C. BRUSSELS 250  
    1D. BRUSSELS 1044

Classified By: Political Economic Counselor Richard Eason, reason 1.4(b)  
) and (d)

1. Summary: Policy-making on non-proliferation and disarmament issues in Belgium is concentrated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the direction of Werner Bauwens, Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. Final decisions on policy are made in consultation with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yves Leterme and his chief of staff, Franciskus van Daele. Internationally, Belgium consults and cooperates most closely with its fellow NATO-7 countries. Belgium's positions are influenced by its officially announced intention to phase out nuclear power, but that position is likely to change, freeing Belgium to speak more clearly on peaceful uses of nuclear power. Belgium's participation in NATO's nuclear mission makes the government particularly sensitive to the disarmament debate. Bauwens and the GOB are strong supporters of the need for disarmament, but with an equal emphasis on non-proliferation and on a balanced approach within Europe, including Russia. The GOB wants to see NATO retain collective defense as its core mission. Bauwens is ready to facilitate exchanges between Belgian and U.S. legislators aimed at achieving Senate ratification of the CTBT. It is also ready to move forward quickly on a Fissile Materials Cutoff Treaty. NGO's and parliamentarians opposed to nuclear weapons are vocal in Belgium, and the government must at least show respect to their views if not accede to them. Agencies charged with security of nuclear materials and the nuclear power industry in Belgium provide mostly technical expertise to the MFA, not policy advice on non-proliferation and disarmament. Belgium has a special interest in maintaining the supply of highly enriched uranium to its facility in Mol, Belgium, which produces a large part of the world's medical isotopes. Belgium places high importance on being invited to the Washington Summit on Nuclear Security in March. End Summary.

12. (C) This telegram supplements post's response to State 6970 (ref C), which contains detail on Belgium's positions in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review. On September 4, Poloffs discussed Belgium's policies on disarmament and

non-proliferation with Werner Bauwens, the MFA's Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. Bauwens is the MFA's and the GOB's lead and main expert on issues relating to non-proliferation and disarmament. He has a small staff in Brussels, and also communicates regularly by telephone and e-mail with Belgian diplomats in Geneva, Vienna and New York.

Two officers work on the issues in each of the missions mentioned. Other officers of the MFA may be pulled in to work on non-proliferation and disarmament as needed. The Ambassadors in the missions usually defer to Bauwens's expertise. Final decisions on Belgium's approaches to the NPT, CD and other non-proliferation and disarmament fora are made by the Foreign Minister, Yves Leterme, in consultation with Bauwens and with Leterme's chief of staff, former NATO Ambassador Franciskus Van Daele. In some cases, their decisions on policy might need to be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers, which can be expected to give its approval if the positions do not deviate too significantly from tradition.

13. (C) Belgium is a member of the EU, but on non-proliferation issues, it cooperates most closely with what Bauwens termed the "NATO-7" -- Belgium, along with the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Lithuania, Turkey and Poland. These countries have a like-minded approach, Bauwens said, and he consults informally with counterparts in their governments. He believes that the NATO-7 group together can in some instances have more influence than a large country like the United States because some countries are uncomfortable in openly siding with the U.S.

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14. (S) Bauwens said that non-proliferation and disarmament are sensitive issues for the Belgian government. For one reason, this is because the GOB has established a goal of phasing out its nuclear power plants beginning in 2015. Because of this policy, the GOB has not been a vocal advocate for peaceful uses of nuclear power. The government realizes that eliminating nuclear plants is no longer a realistic goal under current circumstances, and the Prime Minister wants to have a solution to the matter by late October, 2009. Bauwens expects that a decision will be made to keep all Belgian nuclear power plants open, or to shut a certain number of them. On the military side, the American tactical nuclear weapons stationed at Kleine Brogel in Belgium make its government take a cautious approach. However, non-proliferation and disarmament are issues in which FM Leterme takes a serious interest. Leterme favors a "zero-option" both for disarmament and for proliferation. Bauwens expects Leterme to be more outspoken publicly and in international meetings on these issues than his predecessor, Karel De Gucht. He will also be willing to carry the message to the Russians and the Chinese, whose cooperation on Iran and other non-proliferation issues Bauwens deems essential. Both Leterme and Bauwens will attend the special session of the UN Security Council on Non-Proliferation on September 24. Bauwens added that the GOB is extremely interested in being invited to the World Summit on Nuclear Security in March in Washington.

15. (S) The government will have to be careful in handling an upcoming parliamentary initiative to ban nuclear weapons from Belgium (ref D), and does not want to allow it to interfere with international disarmament processes, Bauwens said. The government's policy is that all such weapons should be eliminated, but this can only be done in concert with Belgium's NATO allies. Poloff asked Bauwens whether the GOB would really prefer the weapons to stay or to go. He responded by reiterating that a decision to eliminate the weapons must be taken in concert with NATO. Bauwens believes that it is unfair and even dangerous to unilaterally remove the weapons from Belgium and leave Russia's tactical nuclear capability unchanged. He continued that he argues to those who advocate a "nuclear free Europe" that they must include Russia in that term; to exclude Russia from European

disarmament obligations implies it is not a European state. The implication makes the advocates uncomfortable, he said, smiling. Bauwens said that if NATO is to move toward disarmament it must clarify a new strategy for the alliance. In that debate, Belgium favors a NATO which retains collective defense as its core mission. Bauwens said that Belgium's position is based on its experiences with invasion over the course of the 20th century and even earlier. At the same time, Bauwens warned that the GOB would not speak loudly about its desire to keep the weapons until they are no longer needed.

¶16. (C) The GOB will make signature of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty a priority, Bauwens said. It also is eager to see the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) come into force. Bauwens said that he wants to help in U.S. efforts to ratify the CTBT by encouraging exchanges between members of the U.S. Senate and Belgian parliamentarians, who would urge ratification on their U.S. counterparts.

¶17. (C) Belgium has a strong constituency for disarmament, particularly, but not exclusively, among the Socialist Parties in both Flanders and Wallonia. However, the francophone socialist party is a member of the government coalition and so far has not taken strong stands in opposition to relevant policies agreed within the cabinet. Bauwens meets regularly with NGO's and parliamentarians who advocate rapid disarmament in Belgium and globally. The government must take their views into account and show them respect, even if Belgium's policy at home and in the NPT and other fora does not bend to their will. The Belgian agencies ONDRAF/NIRAS (National Agency for Radioactive Waste and Enriched Fissile Materials) and FANC/AFCN (Federal Agency for Nuclear Control) are charged with control of nuclear waste

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and physical security of nuclear materials respectively. The Belgian company Electrabel is owned by the French company GDF Suez and operates all of Belgium's power plants. These entities provide mainly technical expertise to the MFA and not significant influence on disarmament or nonproliferation policy.

¶18. (C) Belgium has one special interest in the nuclear area. Its SCK/CEN BR-2 research reactor in Mol, Belgium is an important supplier to the global market for medical isotopes used in the world's hospitals, using highly enriched uranium produced in the United States. U.S. inspectors reviewed physical protection at the facility that produces the isotopes in Belgium in May 2009 in order to facilitate continued issuance of export licenses for the raw material used in isotope production. Bauwens said that he and the facility understand the need for good security and are prepared to meet the inspection team's request that they conduct an exercise of emergency response procedures prior to submitting their request to the Department of Energy for an export license to Belgium. Bauwens reminded that a cutoff of supplies from the United States would severely impact the worldwide availability of medical isotopes for cancer and other treatments.

¶19. (C) Given the strong influence that Bauwens has on NPT and other related issues, Post recommends that dialogue with the GOB begin with him in Brussels or at international meetings such as the UNSC special session September 24. Embassy Brussels stands ready to engage with Bauwens on Department's behalf as needed.

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